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# THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

MARCH 15th, 1855.

## MOZART'S MASSES.

### THE REQUIEM.

Contributed by E. HOLMES.

(Concluded from page 311.)

It is difficult to resist the wish to notice what has been said *against* this work; and before proceeding to the *Sanctus*, it may be well to observe that the passage in the *Hostias*, beginning—



followed by several bars of similar construction, has been censured by the late M. Godfried Weber for its unmeaning alternation of high and low, loud and soft. People judge of the sentiments conveyed by sounds according to their degree of imagination; and to musicians it often happens that however well versed in the theory and practice of their art, they are led into serious errors through want of sympathy with the ideal, —a quality of composition not amenable to rule and precedent.\*

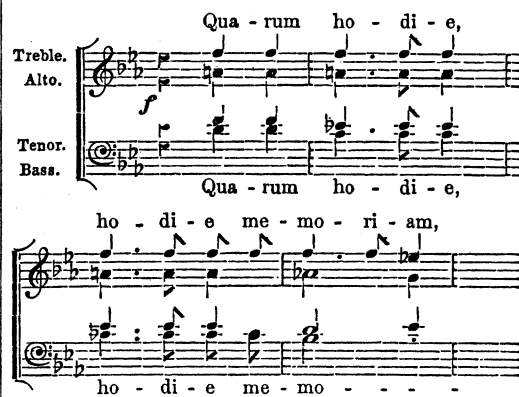
With regard to the passage, "Hostias et preces," what is exclamatory and what is suppliant in it, point to its meaning very intelligibly as that of prayerful petition, and deny its example of the senseless opposition of sounds, "high and low," by turns, of which the Composer has been accused. However, if it be contended that the splendour of Mozart is greatly subdued in the *Hostias*, it will be readily granted, for certainly it is the least important part of his work, being only intended to relax the incessant attention demanded by the rest of the music; and as the more sober and dull tints in the coloring of a good picture heighten the effect of what is bright and attractive in it, so this movement aids the design of

\* The wrong inflicted on composers, by misinterpreting their poetry, is common on the first appearance of the most excellent works, when the best things are often set down as bad, and the most solemn sometimes raise a laugh—as is known to have happened in the *Agnus Dei* of Beethoven's Mass in C, where the words *Miserere* being to be repeated rather fast, have had their import and poetical meaning quite misunderstood. The idea in the mind of the composer was clearly that of prayer, or eager entreaty uttered in low and scarcely articulate sounds; so understood, it is the proper language of humiliation and contrition, and of an effect highly religious. But vulgar associations of the comic kind always accompanying words quickly reiterated—this fine passage has, at a first trial, been generally received as extremely eccentric, if not somewhat ridiculous. Yet whoever ventures to enlarge the contracted boundaries of sacred music by bold and original conceptions, should not have his innovations too hastily condemned as heresy; for a thought truthfully imagined is sure to make its way, however opposed for a time by narrow and conventional opinion.

the Composer. Neither poets nor musicians can be always on the wing—nor could mortal readers and listeners accompany them if they were. However, though there is not much melody in the *Hostias*, save in the beautiful opening bars of the chorus, the Composer does not sink into weakness or insipidity of style. The ear is kept alive by effects, and modulations of a very surprising character. This, for instance, from C to D minor—easy in a commonplace way, but here lengthened out and enriched by art:—



Also the following progression from D minor to E flat, in which the chord of the extreme sharp sixth on C flat, with its root above held on by the sopranos, appears in a new position, and with a most unusual resolution:—



These successions of harmony contained in their day new ideas, and they still disclose a bold and summary treatment of chords, of which a great master could alone sustain the responsibility. Although the research of curious modulation and enharmonic harmony has been prosecuted in our time to a fault, to conceal a want of invention, and the poverty of real ideas, these modulations, in their place in the *Requiem*, continue to please, for no composer has borrowed them who had the same aptitude to place them in the right light, as the original author.

We now reach the *Sanctus*, commencing with a short Adagio of ten bars, for which the Composer summoned all his powers. So frequently as this subject had been set to music by Mozart—at least thirty or forty times in the course of his life—he renewed himself for this last effort with a vigour and grandeur worthy of the occasion. There is not throughout music a more splendid example of the great church style. The symmetrical disposition of the parts in the opening will remind many a reader of his pleasure in this music; and a very effective and prominent feature for the drums (*timpani*) will be noticed, which proves that even in regard to the modern development of this instrument Mozart kept improving to the last days of his life.

The image displays a musical score for the beginning of the *Sanctus*. It features eight staves: Violino 1, Violino 2, Viola, Treble, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Basses/Timpani. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics "Sanc - - - tus," are written below the vocal staves. The score shows the initial bars of the piece, with the timpani playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

As the trumpets, bassoons, and basset-horns double the voices, they may be imagined in order to complete the grandeur of the score, which will then have its full complement of parts. These bars exhibit in a striking manner the effective order of a great choral-instrumental piece; diversity of movement and distinct but symmetrical features in choir and orchestra resulting in perfect unity. Of a composer able to write in this way, it has been well said—"he thinks in score." Mozart considered it essential to orchestral music that the composer should see both the parts of his work and the whole of it at once; composition with him was not to be painted up bit by bit, one thought helping another. Without desiring any limitation to individual powers, or the process of mind by which the pleasures of music may be augmented, the most precious quality of the composer still remains clearness and simplicity, the unfailing accompaniments of greatness. In music as in poetry, it is not monstrous novelties which please, but natural and even familiar things displayed in a new and surprising manner.

Often has the musician endeavoured to discover what it might be in this opening of the *Sanctus* that so elevates the soul with emotions of the sublime; for the progression of the harmony has become well known, and familiar enough to be termed common-place. The old Greek proverb, "Rhythm moves the world," seems to indicate the source of pleasure. Three kinds of motion in the instruments are combined with a vocal phrase of extreme simplicity. The ear is first attracted by the continued and ponderous movement of the double-basses, and with the rush of the drums to end on the third and fifth quaver of the bar (a feature of genius in the instrumentation, which, had it been the conventional *tremolo*, would have possessed neither genius nor effect); the contrast of this complex division of time with the simple iterated notes for the violins and tenors which fill the latter half of the bar—the voices entering in chords of melodious relation to each other, and each time with increasing interest—these are the individual features of a grand and sublime strain of sacred harmony which owes its most powerful operation to rhythm. What is long in description is short in the immediate effect of sounds. When the chorus has swelled to a climax, and the sound has died away on the word "Sabaoth," the *C<sub>4</sub>* of the basses, intoned in powerful unison on the words "pleni sunt coeli," signals another stroke of genius—the sublime of a single note. It is impossible to imagine the loftiest theme of sacred music treated with higher amplitude and gusto; Purcell and Handel might have uplifted their hands in delight at something in their own way:—

Vio. 1.  
Vio. 2.  
Viola.  
Unis.

Treble.  
Alto.

Tenor.  
Bass.

Bassi.  
Timp.

Ple - - ni sunt

Ple - ni sunt cœ

cœ - - li et ter

- - - li et ter

Organs, trumpets, drums—in fact, the whole artillery of sound—is wanted when the chord bursts in on the C $\sharp$ , and the bass is unexpectedly turned into a minor ninth on the root of the harmony. Extremely fine, also, is the passage in continuation, the A $\sharp$  in the bass, on the word “gloria,” and the suspended major seventh in the soprano in the same bar—notes which we name to enjoy in imagination the sympathy of the reader. The Masses Nos. 1 and 2 contain majestic examples of the *Sanctus*; but this one transcends everything, and is evidently the fruit of matured experience.

The *Osanna*, a fughetta, *Allegro*,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , of cheerful character and clear part writing, relieves for a space the mournful character of the work. This movement appears twice: first in D, after the *Sanctus*, and again in B flat, after the *Benedictus*; but it is repeated by the author, we suspect, rather in compliance with custom, and the usual distribution of the text in this part of the Catholic service, than from any especial regard to the music, which is only in the Master's *running hand*.

The *Benedictus* is indeed remarkable. To a musician acquainted with the few notes by which Mozart generally produces his effects, the numerous instruments at work in the symphony might give pause and room for conjecture as to whether this elaborate instrumentation might not be filled up by another hand,—that of Süßmayer. A bar of the opening at full length, shows a curious assemblage of melodies, doubling here and there,

and imitating each other in a fragmentary way, but generally in real parts:—

*Andante.*

Vio. 1.  
Vio. 2.

Viola.

Cor. di  
Bassetto.  
en F.

Fag.

Tromboni.  
d'Alto et  
Tenore.

Bassi.

*mf*

The accompanying of the sweet *cantilena* with trombones, and the general appearance of this introduction, may at first seem to savour of an intrusive hand; but on consideration they coincide with the general plan of the work. Everything in the *Requiem* is peculiar; counterpoint so artistically elaborated, and melodies of equal freshness and character, scarcely enter into any of the other Masses. The *Benedictus*, which usually is but a name for an Angel's song, peculiar to Mozart, in the *Requiem* has its sweetness mingled with somewhat awful and solemn. This idea was probably accidental. The three chords of the trombones in the *Zauberflöte* were still sounding in his ears when he composed this *Benedictus*, and being always able to find double employment for a good thought, here we find them again at each of the principal cadences, marvelously enriching the soft melodious effect of each close.

It is superfluous to point to the beauties of the vocal parts of the *Benedictus*, as they are well known and fully enjoyed by singers of taste and refinement. The instrumental features are less familiar; and yet there is in these scarcely a single phrase which has not attraction for the eye or a charm for memory. To every man of his orchestra, Mozart still gives a tune for his own private and special enjoyment, over and above what in the aggregate falls to him and to the audience. His old companions, the bassoon players, are still looked after with peculiar regard. In what a friendly manner we are greeted by this inner part doubled with the tenors:—

\* This being a complete section of the score, these parts are not transposed as before, but are to be read a fifth lower than they are written.

and again and better still in the melodious elegance of this return :—



What care in marking the accents of the phrase—what evident enjoyment and interest of the Composer in his work! To the minutest bowings of the violins, everything claims attention. But the finest effect of the bassoons is in the final cadence, devised on purpose for the display of their tones. The chords which precede the following passage should be recalled by the musician; it will be an easy task :—

This melodious close, so inimitably delicate, and so characteristic of Mozart, shows how some part of the scoring at least could be called in question; for who, before Meyerbeer and Berlioz, would have thought of accompanying such a cadence even with the softest notes of three trombones and two trumpets? Yet it rather proves that the Composer, true to himself, was ever trying to extend the domain of his beloved art. The entire structure of the *Benedictus*, both in the voice and orchestra parts, reveals such a great plan, and an expression so impassioned and earnest, that it is certain the author devoted himself to it with all his powers. What he chiefly meant for posterity—what was the especial object of his own preference—and what went fast or slow under his pen, can never be mistaken; it may be known as well as if we saw him at the moment, com-

posing. The *Benedictus* continues the full part writing characteristic of the *Requiem*; yet its counterpoint is not scholastic and fugal—it is rather that of elegant melodies, placed in such artistic confluence, that, though eight or ten parts be on the page, their freedom is never obstructed.

We take this composition to be the last in the work which occupied the Composer with intensity of thinking. As he approached the end, his pen went quicker. The *Agnus Dei* consists of two main thoughts expanded by genius into a movement. What profound melancholy in the opening! The Composer may have revolved this introduction as he sat, pale and dejected, in a little alcove of Trattner's garden at Vienna (where much of his work is said to have been written), thinking of his own end, and of the night-wind already sighing over his grave. The orchestral phrase sounds in fitful gusts :—

This orchestral phrase, *forte-piano*, continues throughout the movement in different keys and modulations, giving place now and then to a second principal thought on the words "Dona eis requiem," the perfect language of religious solemnity :—

(Continued from page 338.)

With the first rapid conception of these two ideas—the one orchestral and dramatic, the other purely sacred—the work was accomplished. This last movement seems to unfold the rapid process of Mozart's composition—the variety in unity which he possessed and could sustain in music with endless intellectual resources. The cadence of deceptive harmony at the close of the *Agnus* is similar to the “passus et sepultus” of some other Masses; at “Lux æterna” the opening reappears, and the *Requiem* is concluded.

## MUSIC

## AMONG THE POETS AND POETICAL WRITERS.

By MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

(Continued from page 322.)

CHAUCER's theory of sound is expressed in his own quaint, simple, straightforward way, which gives a peculiar earnestness and truth to every word that he utters. It is as if he so thoroughly felt persuaded of what he advances, that he would fain make his readers share his conviction; whether it be of the beauty of the morning, the scent of a field flower, the glory of May, or the origin of sound. He says:—

“Sound is naught but air ybroken;  
And every speech that is spoken,  
Wher loud or prive, foul or fair,  
In his substance ne is but air;  
For as flame is but lighted smoke,  
Right so is sound but air ybroke:  
But this may be in many wise,  
Of the which I will thee devise,  
As sound cometh of pipe or harp;  
For when a pipe is blown sharp  
The air is twist with violence  
And rent; lo! this is my sentence:  
Eke when that men harp stringes smite,  
Whether that it be much or lite, [little]  
Lo! with the stroke the air it breaketh,  
And right so breaketh it when men speaketh.”

~~~~~  
“When whispering winds do softly steal  
With creeping passion through the heart;  
And when at ev'ry touch we feel  
Our pulses beat and bear a part;  
When threads can make  
A heart-string quake,  
Philosophy  
Can scarce deny,  
The soul can melt in Harmony.  
O! lull me! lull me! charming air,  
My sense is rock'd with wonders sweet;  
Like snow on wool thy fallings are,—  
Soft like a spirit's are thy feet.  
Grief who need fear,  
That hath an ear?  
Down let him lie,  
And slumb'ring die,  
And change his soul for Harmony.”—*Strode*.

~~~~~  
“One of the most pure and innocent pleasures which we can enjoy we owe to Music. It possesses the power of charming our ears, soothing our passions, affecting our hearts, and influencing our propensities. How often has Music dissipated our gloom, quickened the vital spirits, and ennobled our sentiments! An art so pleasing and useful well deserves our attention; and calls upon us to employ it to the glory of our beneficent Creator.”—*Sturm*.

“There is a charm, a power, that sways the breast;  
Bids every passion revel or be still;  
Inspires with rage, or all your cares dissolves;  
Can soothe distraction, and almost despair.  
That power is Music: far beyond the stretch  
Of those unmeaning warblers on our stage;  
Those clumsy heroes, those fat-headed gods,  
Who move no passion justly but contempt:  
Who, like our dancers (light indeed and strong!),  
Do wondrous feats, but never heard of grace.  
The fault is ours; we bear those monstrous arts;  
Good Heaven! we praise them! we, with loudest peals,  
Applaud the fool that highest lifts his heels;  
And, with insipid show of rapture, die  
Of idiot notes impertinently long.  
But he the Muse's laurel justly shares,  
A poet he, and touch'd with Heaven's own fire,  
Who, with bold rage, or solemn pomp of sounds,  
Inflames, exalts, and ravishes the soul;  
Now tender, plaintive, sweet almost to pain,  
In love dissolves you; now in sprightly strains  
Breathes a gay rapture through your thrilling breast;  
Or melts the heart with airs divinely sad,  
Or wakes to horror the tremendous strings.  
Such was the bard, whose heavenly strains of old  
Appeas'd the fiend of melancholy Saul.  
Such was, if old and heathen fame say true,  
The man who bade the Theban domes ascend,  
And tam'd the savage nations with his song;  
And such the Thracian, whose melodious lyre,  
Tun'd to soft woe, made all the mountains weep;  
Sooth'd even th' inexorable powers of hell,  
And half redeem'd his lost Eurydice.  
Music exalts each joy, allays each grief,  
Expels diseases, softens every pain,  
Subdues the rage of poison, and the plague;  
And hence the wise of ancient days ador'd  
One power of physis, melody, and song.”—*Armstrong*.

~~~~~  
“Is there a heart that Music cannot melt?  
Alas! how is that rugged heart forlorn;  
Is there, who ne'er those mystic transports felt  
Of Solitude and Melancholy born!  
He needs not woo the Muse; he is her scorn.  
The sophist's rope of cobweb he shall twine;  
Mope o'er the schoolman's peevish page; or mourn,  
And delve for life in Mammon's dirty mine;  
Sneak with the scoundrel fox, or grunt with glutton  
swine.”—*Beattie*.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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